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# Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

**Summary record of the 1st meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 22 February 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Temporary Chair*: Mr. Guterres ..... (Secretary-General of the United Nations)
*Chair*: Mr. Webson ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Opening of the session by the Secretary-General**

1. **The Temporary Chair** said that it was an honour to open the 2018 session of the Committee as the decolonization agenda was close to his heart. Until the 1970s, his country, Portugal, had maintained a colonial policy that had led to three tragic wars in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique. The Portuguese democrats were well aware that Portugal owed the Carnation Revolution of 25 April 1974, which had restored democracy to his country, to the liberation movements in those three former colonies. A strong alliance had always existed between those liberation movements and the Portuguese democrats as the movements had fought for the liberation of their peoples and countries, and the Portuguese democrats had fought for freedoms within Portugal itself. He shared a strong feeling of solidarity with peoples under colonial rule. Decolonization had been a central aspect of his previous political life and, as such, it was a privilege for him to preside over the Committee, albeit briefly.

2. The General Assembly had consistently reaffirmed decolonization as a priority, and it continued to do so. Currently there were 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories under the purview of the Committee. He commended the Committee on its contribution to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, taking into account the circumstances of each Territory. Dialogue and cooperation between the Committee, the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and other stakeholders was crucial.

3. Expressing his solidarity with the Non-Self-Governing Territories that had been affected by hurricanes in 2017, he commended the Committee on its call for the relevant administering Powers and United Nations specialized agencies and other United Nations entities to continue to assist in those Territories' recovery efforts.

**Election of the Chair**

4. *Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda) was elected Chair by acclamation.*

5. *Mr. Webson (Antigua and Barbuda) took the Chair.*

6. **The Chair** said that the delegations of Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Mozambique, Morocco, Spain, Turkey and Uruguay had indicated their wish to participate in the work of the Committee as observers.

7. The Committee continued to discharge the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, guided by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, as well as other relevant resolutions. With the end of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism approaching, the Committee must intensify its efforts to implement the Declaration and all relevant resolutions on a case-by-case basis. In order to fulfil its mandate, the Committee should continue to seek suitable means for the immediate and full implementation of the Declaration. The Committee attached great importance to maintaining and strengthening frank and constructive dialogue and cooperation with the administering Powers as well as with the Non-Self-Governing Territories under its purview.

**Adoption of the agenda**

8. *The agenda was adopted.*

**Election of other officers of the Committee**

9. *Ms. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba), Mr. Djani (Indonesia) and Mr. Sumah (Sierra Leone) were elected Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

**Organization of work** (A/AC.109/2018/L.1 and A/AC.109/2018/L.2)

10. **The Chair** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General (A/AC.109/2018/L.1) indicating the resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Committee for the current year. The Committee also had before it a note by the Chair (A/AC.109/2018/L.2) containing suggestions concerning the Committee's organization of work, programme of work and timetable. Since the issuance of A/AC.109/2018/L.2, the Bureau had considered a request that the two meetings on the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) should be held on Thursday 21 June 2018, and that the Committee should consider the questions of French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Tokelau, and the report of the Pacific regional seminar, on Friday 22 June 2018. He took it that the Committee wished to approve the tentative programme of work and timetable contained in A/AC.109/2018/L.2 as orally revised, with the understanding that they might be subsequently revised if required.

11. *It was so decided.*

12. **The Chair** suggested that, in accordance with the practice of the General Assembly, the Committee should

agree to continue the practice whereby its meetings could be declared open without the presence of the quorum required under rule 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. That would enable the Committee to avoid late starts and proceed expeditiously with its work, thereby making optimal use of available resources. However, in accordance with rule 108, the presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decision to be taken.

13. *It was so decided.*

**Organization of the 2018 Pacific regional seminar**

14. **The Chair** said that the Committee had yet to find a host for the 2018 Pacific regional seminar from among its members from the Asia-Pacific region, which was making it difficult to organize the event in a timely manner. The Committee's budget had been gradually reduced over several bienniums, which had hindered its capacity to fully and effectively carry out its two important annual mandates, namely dispatching visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and organizing its regional seminars. The Committee would have to adjust its way of operating, particularly its travel plans. In the meantime, members of the Committee could contribute to the efficient implementation of its mandates by providing information in a timely manner.

15. The advent of the new centralized administrative system, Umoja, meant that official travel requests now took longer to process and must therefore be initiated much further in advance in order to avoid exorbitant costs resulting from last-minute bookings. The Committee must find a host for the seminar as quickly as possible. He therefore suggested that Committee members from the Asia-Pacific region that were interested in hosting the seminar should notify him by 8 March 2018; if no offers were received from Asia-Pacific members by that date, other Committee members could volunteer to host the seminar. Once a host had been determined, the Committee would meet again, in late March, in order to plan and organize the seminar. That meeting would be announced in the Journal.

16. *It was so decided.*

**Visiting mission to New Caledonia**

17. **The Chair** said that the 2017 Bureau of the Committee had consulted the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations regarding the organization of the visiting mission to New Caledonia called for in General Assembly resolution 72/104. He took it that the Committee wished to proceed with the proposed visiting mission to New Caledonia.

18. *It was so decided.*

19. **The Chair** said that the Bureau had proposed that the visiting mission to New Caledonia should take place on the dates suggested by the administering Power, 12-16 March 2018, with consultations to be held in Paris on 19 March 2018. It had also proposed that the mission should be composed of three Committee members and two Secretariat staff from the two departments that supported the substantive and procedural work of the Committee, and should be funded from the Committee's budget. He took it that the Committee wished to proceed with the proposed dates and composition of the visiting mission.

20. *It was so decided.*

21. **The Chair** said that the outcome of the mission would be a comprehensive report of its activities, including conclusions and recommendations.

22. **Mr. Sarufa** (Papua New Guinea), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, namely, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and his own country, said that the Group supported the calls for a revitalization of the work of the Committee and remained committed to contributing to the emancipation of peoples living under colonialism. New Caledonia was at a critical phase in the run-up to the self-determination referendum scheduled for later in 2018 and the situation required close monitoring and focused attention from the Committee and other concerned parties. The Group therefore strongly supported the planned visiting mission to that Territory and, in view of the timeline for the visit, it called on the Bureau to share the details of the mission with the Committee. The Group would be interested in contributing to the definition of the mission's terms and conditions, and urged the Committee to give special consideration to the request of Fiji and his own country to participate in the visiting mission, despite funding constraints.

23. At their summit the previous week, the Group leaders had reaffirmed their commitment to the New Caledonian self-determination process under the Nouméa Accord and had approved a road map for the Group's support of the process, which would include the provision of practical support at the bilateral, regional and international levels, including through the United Nations, to assist the indigenous Kanak people at all stages of the self-determination process. The Group was determined to contribute to ensuring that the process was just, fair and transparent and led to an outcome respected by all parties involved.

24. As a result of cooperation between the relevant parties in New Caledonia and the administering Power, with support from the Committee, significant progress had been made since the signing of the Matignon Agreements and Nouméa Accord three decades earlier. The Group welcomed the continued positive engagement of France and its approval of the second visiting mission to New Caledonia. However, much work remained to be done, including determining the exact timing of the referendum. Furthermore, the question on self-determination must provide all options available to the people of New Caledonia and must be framed in a way that would be easily understandable to all so that the people could accept the outcome. The electoral list of those qualified to vote in the referendum must be authentic and credible if the people of New Caledonia were to accept the result of the vote. Notable progress had been made in that area, including the political agreement reached on 2 November 2017 between the Nouméa Accord signatory parties and the administering Power, and the amendment to the organic law of France to facilitate the establishment of a fair electoral list. Furthermore, the Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste was working earnestly with all stakeholders in New Caledonia to ensure that the self-determination process remained on track and in accordance with the Nouméa Accord.

25. The Committee should closely monitor the transfer of powers and competencies under the Nouméa Accord, which must be respected regardless of the outcome of the referendum. The Territorial government, political parties and the administering Power should continue to raise public awareness of the self-determination process and the options available to all New Caledonians. In view of the importance of a peaceful environment conducive to the holding of the historic referendum, the Group welcomed the commitment shown by all concerned parties to address the outstanding issues related to the self-determination process and encourage cooperation.

26. The Group was committed to working closely with the administering Power, the Territorial authorities and the Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste on a number of its own initiatives designed to support the self-determination process, including another Group ministerial visit, which would take place after the Committee's visiting mission. The self-determination process taking place under the auspices of the United Nations was a priority for the Group, which would stand in solidarity with the Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste and the New Caledonian people to help them find their own way forward in accordance with the Nouméa Accord.

**Other matters**

27. **Mr. Djani** (Indonesia) said that, as the end of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism approached, the Committee should focus its efforts on expediting the decolonization process for the 17 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories and should not be distracted by other tasks until its mandated work had been completed. It was encouraging that the Committee continued to hold informal consultations and engage with the administering Powers and other stakeholders. The participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in accordance with the United Nations rules of procedure and the Committee's established practices, would help the decolonization process. His delegation welcomed the steps taken to raise awareness of the Committee's work, including the commemoration of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The forthcoming visiting mission to New Caledonia was proof of the value of cooperation between the Committee, the administering Power and the people of the Territory. Indonesia stood ready to support and participate in the New Caledonian process.

28. The Committee should continue to analyse thoroughly the situation in each Non-Self-Governing Territory in order to decide on the best way to proceed, since there was no one-size-fits-all solution. Furthermore, it should continue to involve the administering Powers in those efforts, as strengthened communication with them would make its work more constructive. Continuous, genuine dialogue between the administering Powers, the Non-Self-Governing Territories and other concerned parties was necessary for the Committee to complete its work. The parties should make use of all United Nations forums and bilateral measures to find common ground and move forward. In line with his delegation's opposition to a one-size-fits-all approach, the Committee could seek to identify specific Non-Self-Governing Territories that could be fast-tracked through the decolonization process.

29. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that Cuba would continue working with the Committee to ensure that the peoples of all 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, as well as Puerto Rico, could exercise their right to self-determination. It was vital that the visiting mission to New Caledonia went ahead despite the significant budget cuts affecting the Committee's work, and her delegation welcomed the support shown by France in that regard. The informal consultations held with France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and other concerned parties such as Spain and Argentina, had all been positive and constructive, and had allowed

the Committee to be updated on the situation in each Non-Self-Governing Territory. The Committee should continue to hold such consultations, which, although informal, supported its work in tangible ways.

30. **Ms. Yánez Loza** (Ecuador) said that the Committee could count on the unwavering support of Ecuador for its work.

31. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Committee had achieved a great deal, upholding the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations and working to support decolonization around the world. His Government wholeheartedly supported the Committee and would make every effort to ensure that its work would continue to bear fruit.

32. **Mr. Tejan** (Sierra Leone) said that Sierra Leone had always been a committed member of the Committee and it wished to maintain its active role. In that connection, his delegation was keen to participate in the visiting mission to New Caledonia.

33. **Ms. Lopes De Jesus Pires** (Timor-Leste) said that the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was due to end in 2020, but little progress had been made with regard to the remaining 17 Non-Self-Governing-Territories. Her delegation therefore supported the Committee's intention to intensify its work in order to implement its mandated responsibilities. The Committee should draw up a calendar for visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories on a case-by-case basis, as previously proposed by her delegation, and the relevant administering Powers should engage fully and cooperate with that process. Such a calendar would help the Committee to ensure that it carried out the necessary visiting missions, despite budgetary constraints. Visiting missions enhanced the capacity of the United Nations to assist the peoples under colonialism by providing an effective means of assessing the situations in those Territories as well as ascertaining their aspirations for their future status. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the ongoing cooperation of France in connection with the planned visiting mission to New Caledonia. It looked forward to the referendum on self-determination to be held in that Territory and hoped that the Committee would ensure that it was fair and transparent, in accordance with international law.

34. **Mr. Bahr Aluloom** (Iraq) said that he trusted that the Committee would regain its important role within the United Nations system under the leadership of the new Chair. His delegation would support the Chair unwaveringly to ensure the success of his tenure.

*The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.*